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EFFECTS OF THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE ON THE COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE OF BLACK STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

CHARLESETTA SIMPKINS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1977

Education

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May 1977

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ABSTRACT

Effects Of The Cultural Context Of Language On

The Cognitive Performance Of Black Students

(April 1977)

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The purpose of this study was to ascertain the effects of the cultural context of language on the cognitive performance of Black inner-city students. More specifically, this study was conducted to test the general hypothesis that when Black non-mainstream students (also referred to as inner-city students) are tested for their comprehension of reading materials in Standard American English, they will score significantly higher when the instructions for the lesson are presented in Black Vernacular than when the instructions are presented in Standard American English.

From this general hypothesis the following specific, empirical hypotheses were generated:

1. When Black non-mainstream students are instructed in Black Vernacular on how to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases from clues in reading material, they will score significantly

higher, when tested in Standard American English on their comprehension of the material, than when the instructions are given in Standard American English.

2. When Black non-mainstream students are instructed in Black Vernacular on how to deduce the meaning of figurative language from clues in reading material, they will score significantly higher, when tested in Standard American English, on their comprehension of the material, than when the instructions were given in Standard American English.

The Simpkins Test of Cultural Context (STCC) was used as the assessment instrument. The STCC was developed to assess the effect of the cultural context of language on the performance of two cognitive tasks. The two cognitive tasks, Meaning from Context and Figurative Language are incorporated into the STCC as subtests.

The review of the literature was concerned with examining two conceptual models, the difference and the deficit models, which offer explanations for the poor test performance of Black students in the public schools. In addition, the assumptions of intervention programs which have emerged from the two models were examined.

A total of 234 Black students in the seventh and eighth grades participated in the study. The students were recruited from three schools in the Detroit Public School System which serviced Black inner-city communities.

Two one-way analyses of variance were performed on the data for the total sample and for each of the three schools participating

in the study. In each case, one analysis was performed on the Meaning from Context subtest and one on the Figurative Language subtest with the instructional language (Black Vernacular vs. Standard American English) serving as the independent variable.

The overall results for the total sample were significant. On the Meaning from Context subtest, the total sample obtained a mean score of 10.195 when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 11.613 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular ($p < .001$, one-tailed). On the Figurative Language subtest, the total sample obtained a mean score of 5.585 when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 6.544 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular ($p .012$, one-tailed).

Two major conclusions may be drawn from this study:

1. Black non-mainstream students appear to be penalized by the failure of most instructional materials to incorporate the most familiar language in the explanations and instructions of cognitive tasks which they are expected to perform.

2. When the language used in tests and other instructional materials are modified to be more compatible with the cultural-linguistic environment with which Black non-mainstream children are familiar, they will score significantly higher on these items.

Suggestions are made for further research, utilizing additional cognitive tasks to ascertain to what extent the results of this study can be generalized to the learning of cognitive tasks in general.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Black children are not achieving in this country's public school systems. It is well documented in the literature that as Black children proceed through the schools they fall behind the national average at all grade levels on all measures. The longer they are in school the further behind they fall. This phenomenon is known in the literature as the "cumulative deficit" (Deutsch, 1960).

Coleman and his associates (1966) collected massive amounts of data on children in public schools as part of a national survey. The data were collected on children at the first, third, ninth, and twelfth grades. The survey employed verbal and non-verbal measures and tests of reading and mathematical achievement. The data appeared to support the cumulative deficit hypothesis. The study showed that the relative standing of Black students in relation to White students remained essentially constant in terms of standard deviations, but the absolute differences in terms of grade level discrepancies increased. The Coleman data were consistent with earlier studies conducted by Montague (1964) and Osborn (1960).

A study of the average reading level of students in ten predominantly Black, low socio-economic urban school systems (Lewis, et al., 1973) also indicated that the longer Black students are in school, the further they fall behind the national average.

Black students, in addition to being behind the national average in academic subjects, obtain lower scores on standardized tests of cognitive abilities than White students. As a result of the data on school achievement, it has been generally assumed that the cognitive development processes of Black children are deficient in relation to the same processes in White children.

There exists the possibility that the low achievement of Black students in the public schools, and the low scores on standardized tests of cognitive abilities are related to the fact that many Black children possess a different language than that of the schools, and of the tests used by the schools. Williams and Rivers (1975) attributed the academic failure of Black children to a "mismatch" between the language and culture of the children and the language and culture of the tests and educational programs employed by the public schools.

A similar position is taken by Simpkins (1976). He hypothesized that the cognition of Black, non-mainstream students* is differentially affected by the cultural context of the language used in presenting and explaining a learning task to students. This dissertation is an outgrowth of this general hypothesis. It will test the following general hypothesis:

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*The term "Black non-mainstream" refers to Black Americans who are generally members of the lower socioeconomic class, speak what is known as Black Vernacular or Black English, and relate to the culture which that dialect represents.

When Black, non-mainstream students are tested for their comprehension of reading materials in Standard American English, they will do significantly better when the instructions for the reading lesson are presented in Black Vernacular than when the instructions are presented in Standard American English.

From this general hypothesis, the following specific, empirical hypotheses will be tested:

1. When Black, non-mainstream students are instructed in Black Vernacular on how to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases from clues in reading material, they will do significantly better, when tested on their comprehension of the reading material, than where such students are instructed in Standard American English.

2. When Black, non-mainstream students are instructed in Black Vernacular on how to deduce the meaning of figurative language from clues in reading material, they will do significantly better, when tested on their comprehension of the reading material, than where such students are instructed in Standard American English.

Although the major thrust of this research was to test the foregoing hypotheses, this investigator was also interested in analyzing the following: Would the test results on the task, deriving meaning from contextual clues, be significantly superior to results on the task, deducing the meaning of figurative language? Experience with the STCC indicates that learning to comprehend figurative language is more difficult than deriving meaning from

contextual clues; however, there is no body of research on this topic, and it is hoped that this research will provide a beginning.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The Deficit Model

The intellectual status of Black students has been a topic of widespread interest among social scientists and educators for the past two decades. A substantial amount of literature has been devoted to the study of the so-called "disadvantaged." The deficit model, sometimes referred to as the social pathology model or the deficiency hypothesis, asserts that Black children are deficient in cognitive, linguistic, and general intellectual skills and development. This deficit or deficiency is presumed to be caused by environmental and/or genetic factors.

The literature reports that "disadvantaged" Black children score lower than White children on tests of mental ability (Garrett, 1961; Jensen, 1969; Scholnick, et al., 1968); linguistic performance (Deutsch, 1965; Hess, Jackson, Shipman, 1965); and general or overall school achievement (Colemen, 1966; Deutsch, 1960). According to the literature, Blacks disproportionately contribute to the mentally retarded population. These findings are not limited to economically depressed Blacks. Herber (1968) reports that mental retardation (IQ's below 75) has a much high incidence among Black children than among White children at every SES level.

The majority of the literature interprets the lower scores obtained by Blacks within the framework of the deficit model. Williams (1971) describes the basic assumptions underlying the deficit model:

> The deficit model assumes that Black people are deficient when compared to whites in some measurable trait called intelligence, and that this deficiency is due to genetic or cultural factors or both.... Proponents of this school of thought assume that the intellectual and educational deficits experienced by the so-called culturally deprived are clearly revealed by such...tests as the Stanford-Binet, the Wechsler, Scholastic Aptitude Test, Stanford Achievement Test, Iowa Basic Skills, Graduate Record Examination, and Miller Analogies Test.

IQ Testing

In the nineteenth century all attempts to measure physical characteristics of race as a basis for differences in ability and intelligence ended in failure (Prichard, 1851; Stanton, 1960). Theories of innate inferiority, though plentiful in number, had no substantial evidence to support them. When the intelligence test was introduced by Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon, it scarcely mattered how the races differed physically; now a scientific instrument had been developed which seemed to validate the intellectual inferiority of all non-White races.

Terman (1916) observed that his intelligence test showed that low intelligence was a common trait among Negroes.

> ...it [low intelligence] is very, very common...among Negroes. Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stock from which they come.... The whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew by experimental methods.... The writer predicts that when this is done there will be discovered enormously significant racial differences in

> general intelligence, differences which cannot be wiped out by any scheme of mental culture.... /Such experiments will prove that many Black children are/ ...uneducable beyond the merest rudiments of training. No amount of school instruction will ever make them intelligent voters, or capable citizens in the true sense of the word.

Since 1916, a great deal of experimental research has been conducted on Blacks using intelligence tests. Kennedy, Vernon, and White (1963) indicate that the "cumulative effects of deprivation," the trend toward low IQ's among Black children, intensifies over time. They reported a significant negative correlation between age and IQ in their sample of 1,800 Black, elementary school children. They found that the mean IQ for Black, elementary school children in their sample was 86 at the age of five and 65 at the age of thirteen. Osborn (1960) obtained similar results in a longitudinal study of racial differences and school achievement.

Deutsch and Brown (1964) examined the scores of 543 urban school children on the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test stratified by race, social class, and grade level. They found Black children scored lower than White children regardless of social class. When Black and White children are compared on intelligence tests, generally, Blacks score lower on measured intelligence than Whites. Similar findings have been reported by Garrett (1961), Humphreys (1969), and Shuey (1958).

Arthur Jensen (1969), after extensively reviewing the scientific literature and research on intelligence and race in this

country, reports that Blacks score, on the average, one standard deviation or approximately 15 IQ points below Whites. Jensen (1973) points out that a "deficit" of one standard deviation in IQ cannot be taken lightly or considered to be inconsequential.

> A difference of one standard deviation can hardly be called inconsequential. Intelligence tests have more than proven themselves as a valid predictor.... Unpleasant as these predictions may seem to some people, their significance cannot be wished away because of beliefs in equality.... An average difference of one standard deviation between Blacks and Whites means that the White population will have seven times the percentage of potentially gifted talented persons (i.e., IQ's over 115) as the Black population...that mental retardation will occur seven times as often among Blacks as among Whites.

Language

The language Black children bring to school has been identified, in the literature, as one of the major causal factors contributing to deficits in learning and cognition. Beginning in the sixties, the language or dialect of Blacks became a major topic of research interest. Jones (1960), after examining differential scoring on intelligence tests, concluded Blacks' "lack of facility in the use of the English language...was astounding." Jones assumed that this deficiency is caused by the "common use of dialects by southern Negroes." She concluded that these dialects are "substantially oral shorthand" and "an underdeveloped language which may restrict the average Negro's perceptual discrimination and concept formation."

A similar position was taken by Engelmann (1967). He stated, "too frequently, a four year old child of poverty does not understand

the meaning of such words as long, full, animal, red.... Too frequently he cannot repeat a simple statement such as 'the bread is under the oven' even after he has been given four trials."

Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) reported that the language of disadvantaged children consists of gestures, single words, and a series of poorly connected words and phrases. They speculated that verbal deprivation is the primary reason for the failure of Black children in the public schools. Bereiter and Engelmann stated, "the disadvantaged child has not learned the rules that are necessary for defining concepts, for drawing inferences, for asking questions, and for giving explanations."

Environment and Culture

The environment of the Black community, in general, and the culture of Blacks, in particular, has been the concern of many researchers. The notion of "cultural deprivation" has been advanced and accepted by numerous researchers (Bloom, 1965; Deutsch, et al., 1967; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Hunt, 1961).

Proponents of the cultural deprivation hypothesis argue that the culture and environment and family structure of the Black community retard cognitive and linguistic growth (Bereiter, 1965; Hurst, 1965; Johnson, 1970).

According to Deutsch (1963), speech patterns of the lower class homes may be a causal factor leading to deficits in the children's language development.

> In observations of lower class homes, it appears that speech sequences seem to be temporally very limited and poorly constructed syntactically. It is thus not surprising to find that a major focus of deficit in the children's language development is syntactical organization and subject continuity.

Green (1964) stated it is not only the "inadequate" speech used in the Black disadvantaged home environment that contributes to language deficits, but also the speech used outside of school in the children's peer group and community.

> The very inadequate speech that is used in the home is also used in the neighborhood, on the playground, and in the classroom. Since these poor English patterns are reconstructed constantly by the associations that these young people have, the school has to play a strong role in bringing about a change....

Hunt (1961) concluded that the environment of the Black community, and more specifically the Black inner-city mother, do not provide Black children with adequate social and sensory stimulation. A similar position was taken by Martin Deutsch (1963). Deutsch reported that Black inner-city children experience a form of stimulus deprivation which leads to cognitive and linguistic deficits. He hypothesized that stimulus deprivation is caused by a lack of toys, books, and adequate models of language usage in the Black home and surrounding community.

Cynthia Deutsch (1964) put forth a contrary thesis. She espouses the view that sensory stimulation in the Black home is excessive. She asserts that the high noise level in the Black home, coupled with simultaneous inputs (TV, record players, and

conversations often occurring at the same time), cause the children to inwardly tune out all stimulation, thus creating a vacuum for themselves.

McClelland (1968) attributes a lack of achievement motivation among Black children to failure in the socialization process of the Black home. He hypothesized that the socialization failure of Black children is caused by the matricentric structure of the Black family and the persistence of child-rearing practices which originated during slavery.

Hess, Shipman, Brophy, and Bear (1968) concluded that maternal language style is a major contributing factor of Black children's language deficits. They held that differences (when compared to middle class mothers) in maternal language and teaching styles cause disadvantaged children to be almost uneducable.

Assumptions of the Deficit Model

In the mid-sixties, the War on Poverty was declared. Spurred by urban violence and unrest, the assassination of a popular president, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, America undertook a massive effort to address long-standing and sorely neglected problems of poverty and mounting frustration among the nation's poor. The major focus of this effort was pushed by the Black population who were no longer content to be invisible, to accept docilely their station in American society. The education of Black "disadvantaged" children was selected as a primary target for the war.

Gunnings (1972) describes the emergence of the War on Poverty:

> Early in 1964, the nation was awakened to the inadequacy of existing education for poor, disadvantaged, economically deprived children. Black Americans, particularly, had aroused the nation's conscience to the deprivation and injustices they were suffering. Partly as a conciliatory effort to appease a group that would not let the nation relax, as a therapeutic process to relieve the nation's guilty conscience, and as a commemorative gesture to a slain President, the War on Poverty was instituted. The immediate result was the enactment of legislation...which provided for the establishment of...community action programs. These programs were aimed at the children who were going to be or had been losers in the regular school program. The purpose of these programs, compensatory in nature, was established as the improvement of the social, psychological, economical, and educational welfare of the participants.

Sponsored by the federal government and strongly supported by private foundations, a great many intervention programs were instituted. The major target of these programs were the disadvantaged. The term "disadvantaged" became a euphemism for non-mainstream Blacks and other minorities. The educational area was chosen as the major battlefield.

The Anti-Poverty Program, the popular name for the War on Poverty, was launched with a great deal of enthusiasm, idealism, high expectations, and fanfare. Its educational intervention programs were firmly based on what was considered to be a comprehensive body of research, documenting the cause of the educational deficits of Black children.

Unfortunately, the War on Poverty, for many reasons, never lived up to initial expectations. Confronted with controversy,

failure, and criticism, the Anti-Poverty Program slowly ebbed out of existence. Goldenberg (1973) wrote concerning the demise of the War on Poverty:

> In hindsight, let us be clear about the fact that the late, lamented War on Poverty, especially in terms of the social theory upon which it was based...was never really intended to be a war at all.... Unlike the "target population" for whom it was intended, the War on Poverty was created by people whose faith in America and its institutions was as unshaken as their belief that poverty could be eliminated (and quickly, we might add) through the development of a massive program of individual remediation....

Although the reasons for the failure of the Anti-Poverty Program to live up to expectations are numerous (bureaucratic conservatism, mismanagement, widely publicized failure of some of its programs, questionable evaluation practices, etc.), many researchers agree that the primary cause was in the area of program assumptions. The Anti-Poverty Program's intervention programs were a direct product of social science research based on the deficit model. They relied on the deficit model research for their scientific validity and programmatic direction. A set of interlocking assumptions concerning the "disadvantage" became the superstructure of these intervention programs. These assumptions were, at the time, believed to be "scientific facts," documented by mountains of "hard data."

Stephen and Joan Baratz (1970) examined the underlying assumptions of intervention programs associated with the War on Poverty. They suggest that the failure of social research, based

on the deficit model, to recognize existing cultural forms of the Black community doomed intervention programs, such as Head Start, to failure before they ever got off the drafting board. They stated:

> It is important to understand that the entire intervention model of Head Start rests on the assumption of linguistic and cognitive deficits which must be remediated if the child is to succeed in school.

The Baratzes suggested that the ethnocentric view of the social scientists toward the Black community provided educators with a distorted image of the life patterns of that community. This distorted image, according to the Baratzes, was translated into the rationale of social action programs. The objectives of those programs was to improve the children's language and cognitive skills by altering the culture, home environment, and child rearing practices of the Black family. They stated that most intervention programs of the sixties failed because their goal was to correct deficits in Black children that simply did not exist, rather than to intervene in the school systems that create the problems.

A similar position was advanced by Simpkins (1976). He postulates that the educational problems of Black non-mainstream children are heightened by the assumptions on which intervention programs are based. Simpkins suggests that these assumptions lead interventionists to view the educational problems as Black problems rather than problem of institutional failure.

> The problem is perceived, first and foremost, as a Black problem. The children /Black non-mainstream children/ do not fit the mainstream institutions and way of life. They are often mismatched along the variables of language, culture, and life styles. Following a simplistic and often syllogistic line of reasoning, it is concluded that there is something "wrong with" or "deficient in" Black non-mainstream children. This alleged deficiency calls for intervention and massive remediation in order to get the children to match the mainstream institutions and way of life.

Simpkins states that the faulty, ethnocentric reasoning is supported by a set of assumptions and superstitions which he terms "the Ugly American Syndrome" in social science research. Simpkins presents three general assumptions which he believes to underlie most, if not all, of the War on Poverty intervention programs:

1. There is something intrinsically valuable about American mainstream culture and behavior which makes it the standard of comparison against which all other cultures and behaviors in this country can be evaluated.

2. To be different from American mainstream culture is a sign of deficiency, inferiority, and/or pathology.

3. It is a misnomer to speak of Black non-mainstream culture; or, to paraphrase Glazer and Moynihan (1963), the Black man is an American and nothing else. The only culture he possesses is that of America. He has no unique values or culture to guide him.

These interlocking assumptions, or misassumptions, which were considered to be well grounded in research, lead interventionists to:

1. Employ such concepts as the "middle class measuring rod," "core culture," and "culturally deprived" in the formulation and design of intervention programs.

2. Use standard American English, the language spoken by the middle and upper classes, as a measure of linguistic competency and cognitive capacity and to conceptualize the language spoken by Black children, Black dialect, as a deficient form of standard American English rather than a different dialect.

3. Conceptualize Black cultural conventions, especially the organization of the Black home and child rearing practices--that is, mother-child patterns--as the product of a defective culture which produces linguistically and cognitively impaired children who cannot learn.

4. Attempt to intervene, at the earliest possible period, in the cultural environment of Black children under the rubric of enrichment--the infusion of White middle class cultural values, aspirations, beliefs, and experiences--to compensate for alleged deficiencies.

Simpkins (1976) suggests that the overall failure of intervention programs, based on the deficit model, to improve the educational plight of "disadvantaged" children was due, in large part, to educators' and social scientists' inability to separate scientific fact from cultural ethnocentrism. Educators and social scientists, as a product of their culture, saw only what their culture taught them

to see. They carried their cultural ethnocentrism into their science and used it as a basis for evaluating the academic failure of Black children. Similar positions are shared by Baratz (1970), Barnes (1972), Gunnings (1972), Weaver (1972), Williams (1972), and others.

Cultural Difference Model

The cultural difference model is in direct opposition to the deficit model. Williams (1971) defines the cultural difference model in the following manner:

> Briefly stated, the cultural difference model asserts that the differences noted...in intelligence testing, family and social organizations and studies of the Black community are not the result of pathology, faulty learning, or genetic inferiority. These differences are manifestations of...the culture of Black Americans. The difference model acknowledges that Blacks and whites come from different cultural backgrounds which emphasize different learning experiences necessary for survival. To say that the Black American is different from the white American is not to say that he is inferior, deficient, or deprived. One can be unique and different without being inferior.

The cultural difference model makes a distinction between equality and sameness. It asserts that American education and social scientists have confused equality with sameness. Stephen and Joan Baratz (1970) state:

> ...research with Negro groups has been postulated on an idealized norm of "American behavior" against which all behavior is measured. This norm is defined operationally in terms of the way white middle class America is supposed to behave. The normative view coincides with current social ideology--the egalitarian principle--which asserts that all people are created equal under the law and must

> be treated as such from a moral and political point of view. The normative view, however, wrongly equates equality with sameness. The application of this misinterpreted egalitarian principle...has left the investigator with the unwelcome task of describing Negro behavior not as it is, but rather as it deviates from the normative system defined by the white middle class.

Williams and Rivers (1975) recommended that the vast majority of studies in the area of language and cognitive development of Black children be rejected. They recommended rejection of these studies on the grounds that they were conducted by White researchers who used instruments that were standardized on White children; the studies did not use ethnically relevant content materials and thus led to a pathological or deficit point of view.

A great deal of literature has been devoted to the psychological assessment of Blacksin this country. Conclusions and generalizations stemming from studies of Black-White differences in intelligence and school achievement are well known.

However, as Guilford (1967) stated, there are limitations in tests when the instruments are employed for different racial and cultural groups:

> That there are differences in means of test scores among racial groups, no one can deny. The meaning of these differences are not easy to determine. It can be stated as a general principle, from all that we have considered with respect to conditions and their effects upon test scores, that differences among means reflect differences in needs and opportunities for the development of various kinds of abilities within the culture in which the individuals have their existence.

Similar concerns have been voiced by Cronbach (1970). Cronbach notes that intelligent behavior involves a cultural judgement:

> We must accept Liverant's...conclusion that to decide "what is or is not intelligent behavior involves a cultural judgement" and that a person's variation in efficiency from task to task must be explained by examining his expectations and the rewards available.

In recent years, a growing number of researchers have begun to point out the limitations and cultural bias of tests used for the assessment of Black children. Currently, as well as historically, testers have overlooked the fact that the vast majority of assessment devices used in this country were not designed for the Black population. David Wechsler (1944), one of the pioneers in the testing movement in this country, clearly indicates his test norms were designed to be used exclusively for the White population.

> We have eliminated the "colored" versus "white" factor by admitting at the outset that our norms cannot be used for the colored population of the United States. ...our standardization is based upon white subjects only. We omitted the colored population from our standardization because we do not feel that norms derived by mixing the population could be interpreted without special provisions and reservations.

Budoff (1969), Green (1972), Kagan (1973), Williams (1970, 1972), and numerous other researchers have addressed themselves to the cultural bias of assessment devices in current use. They point out that most assessment devices used in the schools are biased toward those children whose primary culture is similar to the White middle class. Barnes (1972) states:

> It is generally accepted that current...tests have a middle class bias, meaning that the behaviors tapped and the content and/or style of items, or any combination of these dimensions, intersect to a

> greater degree with white middle class experience. If this is the case then these tests should be less successful in predicting criteria performance for the "disadvantaged" generally and for Black Americans in particular....

Studies by Hickey (1972) and Roberts (1970) have reported that many tests which are currently used in the schools for diagnosis and placement, such as the ITPA, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Metropolitan Readiness Test, are both linguistically and culturally biased. Similar findings were reported by Waddell and Cahoon (1970).

Baratz (1973) concludes most of the tests used by the schools discriminate against speakers of Black dialect because the items used on the tests are middle class specific and presented in language not familiar to most speakers of Black dialect. Williams and Rivers (1975) state:

> It is general knowledge that the major standardized tests place exceedingly strong emphasis on verbal skills. In fact, the very popular WISC and Binet may be considered tests of conventional verbal skills.

Williams (1972) outlines the problems inherent in testing Black culturally different children: (a) standardized tests, called predictive variables, in their present composition are biased in favor of those children whose primary language is standard English and whose culture and value system is that of mainstream, White middle class America; (b) educational programs, called criterion variables, are biased against those children whose primary language is Black dialect and whose culture and value system is

that of Black, non-mainstream culture; (c) the structural similarity and content of items in educational programs and in ability tests are nearly identical.

Given the relationship between the predictive variables (standardized tests) and the criterion variables (measures of school performance and the educational programs in the schools), one would expect a high correlation between standardized test scores and school performance. Black culturally different children who score low on the tests tend to do poorly in school because both the tests and the schools are biased against their language and culture, and both are almost identical in structure and content of items.

Language Differences

Beginning in the latter half of the sixties, a body of scientific literature appeared which considers the language of Black so-called "disadvantaged" children as a <u>different</u> rather than a deficient form of English (Baratz, 1968; Cazden, 1966; Labov and Cohen, 1967; Steward, 1967, 1968).

With growing recognition in the literature of the existence of a distinct language system spoken by many Blacks in this country, a series of studies were conducted to describe and analyze the features of that language system. Bailey (1965, 1968), Dillard (1967), Labov (1967), and Steward (1967, 1968) reported that differences between standard English and the language spoken by many Blacks

(sometimes referred to as Black English, Black Vernacular, Black non-standard English, or Black dialect) occur in varying degrees in regard to the sound system, vocabulary, and grammar.

Additional evidence in support of the language difference position as opposed to the language deficiency position was derived from the words of Cazden (1967), Labov (1967), and Moore (1968, 1971). Moore (1968) and Labov (1967) found that "disadvantaged" Black children developed syntactic rules (plurals, negation, past markers, possessives, etc.) to the same degree as middle class children. Cazden (1967) found that the syntactic rules of lower class Black children and middle class children develop at the same pace. Moore (1971) concluded that Black children do not have rules missing from their grammar and do not lag behind middle class children in the acquisition of these rules in the early periods of grammar development.

In response to the language deficit position that Black children from inner-city areas receive little verbal stimulation, hear very little well formed language, cannot speak complete sentences, do not know the names of common objects, and cannot form concepts or convey logical thought, Labov (1969) stated:

> Unfortunately, these notions of language deficits are based on the works of educational psychologists who know very little about language and even less about Negro children. The concept of verbal deprivation has no basis in social reality: In fact, Negro children from the ghetto area receive a great deal of verbal stimulation, hear more well-formed sentences than middle-class children, and participate fully in

> a highly developed verbal culture; they have the same basic vocabulary, possess the same capacity for conceptual learning, and use the same logic as anyone else who learns to speak and understand English.
>
> The notion of verbal deprivation is part of the modern mythology of educational psychology, typical of the unfounded notions which tend to spread rapidly in our educational system.

Baratz (1969) questioned Cynthia Deutsch's (1964) findings on the deficient auditory discrimination of Black "disadvantaged" children when compared to White middle class children.

> It is no wonder then, that Cynthia Deutsch should find in her assessment of auditory discrimination that disadvantaged Black children do not "discriminate" as well as white children from middle class linguistic environments. She administered a discrimination task that equated "correct responses" with judgements of equivalences and differences in standard English sound usage. Many of her stimuli, though different for the standard English speaker (e.g., pin-pen), are similar for the Negro nonstandard speaker. She attributed the difference in performance of disadvantaged children to such things as the constant glare of the television in their homes, and there being so much "noise" in their environment that the children tended to "tune out." However, Black children make responses based on the kind of language they consider appropriate.... In the same way that cot (for sleeping) and caught (for ensnared); or marry (to wed), Mary (the girl), and merry (to be happy) are not distinguished in the speech of many white people...pin and pen are the same in the language of many ghetto Blacks.

Baratz, in the same article, reports the results of a sentence repetition task study. The study was similar to the one performed by Engelmann (1967) from which he concluded that Black children cannot repeat a simple statement. Baratz, unlike Engelmann

however, used sentences in standard English and in non-standard English. Examples of the two sets of sentences are:

Standard English

"I asked Tom if he wanted to go to the picture that was playing at the Howard."

Non-standard English

"I asks Tom do he wanta go to the picture that be playin' the Howard."

The results of the study were as follows:

> As expected, the results of the sentence-repetition indicated that Whites were superior to Negroes in repeating standard English sentences, but on the other hand, Negroes were far superior to Whites in repeating Negro nonstandard English sentences. Performance of the various sentences was influenced far more by the race of the child than by his age.

Baratz concluded from her study:

> The fact that standard and nonstandard speakers exhibited similar translation behaviors when confronted with sentences that were outside of the primary code indicates quite clearly that the language deficiency that has so often been attributed to the low income Negro is not a language deficit so much as a difficulty in code switching when the second code (standard English) is not as well learned as the first (nonstandard English).

To explain why Black children receive lower scores on psychological tests of cognitive abilities and on tests given in the schools, Williams and Rivers (1975) conducted a study similar to the one conducted by Baratz. They translated the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts into two versions: a standard version and a nonstandard version. The Boehm Test was administered under two conditions--the standard version of test instructions and the

non-standard version of test instructions--to 990 Black, elementary children in the St. Louis public school system. The results of their experiment indicated that the mean score of the non-standard group, on the non-standard version, was significantly higher than that of the standard group on the standard version. Williams and Rivers concluded that:

> The results...certainly indicate that Black children are penalized by instructions on group tests which are presented in standard English. However, the results also indicate that when the language in test instructions is modified to be more compatible with the dialectic environment in which the child is familiar, he performs as well as, and in some cases, better than high socio-economic children....

Williams and Rivers attributed the academic failure of Black children to a "mismatch" between the language and culture of the children and the language and culture of the tests and educational programs employed by the public schools.

Based on his observations, Simpkins (1976) cited the following dialogue between two students:

> Hey man, what was that dude talking 'bout? I ain't understand a word of that stuff. I was completely lost. And everybody else look like they knew what was going on. I'm gon drop this class; that shit is hard as Chinese algebra.
>
> The other student responded:
>
> No man, hang on in. That stuff is light. It's just the way the dude talk that make it seem hard. Dig it, what the dude was trying to say was....
>
> After the fellow student finished translating the lecture, the first student said:

Damn man, why didn't he say that in the first place?
Them white folks always be trying to make stuff hard.

Simpkins postulated that Black, non-mainstream children possess the same cognitive apparatus and abilities as mainstream children. He contends that differences in academic performance occur because the cognitive apparatus of these children is often differentially triggered by the cultural context of the language used. Simpkins suggested that the differential triggering of the students' cognitive apparatus often causes learning to be more effective for Black, non-mainstream students "in the streets" than in the classrooms; and that the students must perform an added cognitive operation in order to grasp many of the concepts taught in the schools. The students must translate incoming conceptual material into a familiar cultural context in order to assimilate it.

Assumptions and Discussion of Cultural Difference Model

Beginning in the mid-sixties, coinciding with the launching of the War on Poverty, the cultural difference position, a counter-argument to the deficit position, started appearing in the language literature. The cultural difference theorists based their argument on the then recent discovery by linguists that Black, urban inner-city dwellers possess a consistent, though different, rule-governed linguistic system. They called for a revolution in scientific thought concerning Black people. They challenged the deficit

assumptions, which relied heavily on data from language research and standardized tests, on the basis that deviations from the mainstream normative patterns were falsely interpreted as deficits. Stephen and Joan Baratz (1970) state:

> The major support for the assertion of a revolution in scientific thinking about the Negro comes from the discovery that the urban Negro has a consistent, though different, linguistic system. This discovery is an anomaly in that it could not have been predicted from the social pathology paradigm. This finding...violates many of the perceptions and expectations about Negro behavior which are built into the assumptive base of the social pathology model. This assumptive base, it is argued, has restricted our phenomenological field to deviations from normative behavior rather than to descriptions of different normative configurations.

Both the proponents of the deficit position and the cultural difference position agree that Black children are failing in the school and that something should be done. They differ on the cause of the failure and the course of intervention. Proponents of the cultural difference position reject deficit model assumptions that the cause is the children's apparent unreadiness for school, and that intervention programs should be focused on the children's language, family, and sociocultural system in order to bring them in line with the schools and the mainstream society. Cultural difference proponents argue that America is a polycultural society with a monocultural school system. They make the assumption that the school's unwillingness to accommodate to the children's language and culture is the cause, and that intervention

should be focused at the level of the schools, its teachers, and curricula rather than at the level the children.

Unlike the deficit model, very few government and foundation sponsored intervention programs have emerged from the cultural difference model. Although there is an increasing amount of theoretical literature on the cultural difference position, very little applied research and development has taken place. At the present time, this is to be expected, owing to the relative newness of the model and the poverty of government and foundation funds for basic research and development. An extensive search of the literature failed to reveal sizable government or foundation sponsored intervention programs.

Although there is a great deal of diversity within the cultural difference position, some of the assumptions upon which intervention programs could and undoubtedly will be based in the future, can be stated with a high degree of agreement among proponents of the position:

1. No language or dialect is structurally superior to another language or dialect (DeStefano, 1973).

2. Every language variety is systematic and ordered. Black dialect is not irregular or haphazard and is not an aberration of a more standard form of English (Wolfram, 1970; Labov, 1969).

3. Language and culture are inextricably bound together. To deny one's language or dialect is to deny one's culture; to

disparage a person's language is to disparage a person's culture (Goodman, 1965; Simpkins, Gunnings, and Keatney, 1972).

4. A person cannot be cognitively less competent than is necessary to master the vastly complex rule system of his/her native language (Cole, Gay, Glick, and Sharp, 1971; Simpkins, 1976).

5. Differences in performance on standardized tests of cognitive abilities reside more in the situation and cultural context to which particular cognitive processes are applied than in the existence of a cognitive process or structure in one cultural or racial group and its absence in others (Cole, Gay, Glick, and Sharp, 1971; Labov, 1969; Simpkins, 1976; Williams, 1975).

The cultural difference model and its concomitant assumptions appear to hold the promise that intervention programs will be designed to take into consideration the language and culture of Black children and draw on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. However, one must anticipate that there will be some resistance to adopting the cultural difference position. Stephen and Joan Baratz (1970) state:

> ...there may be resistance to adopting the cultural difference model which stems not only from the inherent methodologies of the social pathology theory, but also from the...often unexpressed socio-political view of our current racial situation--views which are unarticulated and therefore unexamined. Thus, the resistance we anticipate may be intensified by the fear that talking about differences in Negro behavior may automatically produce in the social pathologist the postulation of genetic differences.

At the present time, there are few concrete extensions of the cultural difference model in this country's school system. The efficacy of this position cannot be ascertained due to lack of programmatic extensions.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 234 Black students in the seventh and eighth grades. The subjects attended predominantly Black public schools in Detroit.

The following criteria for selection of the public schools were used:

1. The school was located in the inner-city community.
2. The school serviced a low-income community.
3. The school had a minority enrollment of at least 60%.

In fact, the three schools participating in the study had an average enrollment of 85% Black students. The educational staff at the three schools was composed of 66% minority group members. According to the Policies and Procedures for Conducting Research Studies in the Detroit Public Schools (see Appendix A), all research projects to be conducted in the schools must have approval. Permission for the subjects to participate in the study was obtained from the Research and Evaluation Department; the regional superintendents; and the school principals.

In order to obtain approval for the study, this researcher submitted a two-page summary of the proposed research on a form

titled Research Study for Which Approval is Sought (see Appendix B) to the Research and Evaluation Department of the Detroit Public School System. The Department reviewed the request for the contribution that it could make to education in general and to the school system in particular. The first source of approval, the Research and Evaluation Department, approved the study, and identified several appropriate school regions according to the criteria for selection of subjects presented earlier in this chapter. Notice of interest to participate in the approved study (see Appendix C) were mailed to five of the eight regional superintendents. Three regional superintendents submitted positive notice of interest to participate.

Selected school principals were contacted in the regions whose superintendents had approved the proposed research. One school principal per region granted permission for the study to be conducted. To maintain anonymity of the three schools involved with the study, they will be identified henceforth as School 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Eight classrooms were administered the Simpkins Test of Cultural Context.

Instrument

The Simpkins Test of Cultural Context (STCC) was used as the assessment instrument for this study. The STCC (Simpkins, C. and Simpkins, G., 1975) was developed to assess the effects of the cultural context of language on the performance of students on a cognitive task.

The STCC consists of two forms, Form A and Form B. In each form there are two sub-tests, Meaning from Context and Figurative Language. Each sub-test consists of a mini-lesson explanation on finding meaning from context and on understanding figurative language, followed by fourteen test items in Standard English on each topic.

Each form also consists of two sections. Section One of Form A consists of a lesson explanation in Standard English on meaning from context, followed by fourteen test items in Standard English. Section Two of Form A consists of a lesson explanation in Black Vernacular on figurative language, followed by fourteen test items in Standard English. Section One of Form B consists of a lesson explanation in Black Vernacular on meaning from context, followed by the same fourteen test items in Standard English that are used in Section One of Form A. Section Two of Form B consists of a lesson explanation in Standard English on figurative language, followed by the same fourteen test items that are used in Section Two of Form A (see Appendix D for the two forms of STCC).

Accompanying the assessment instrument is a standard set of teacher directions which is used for administration of the STCC (see Appendix E for a copy of the teacher directions).

The following Meaning from Context sub-test illustrates the two language differences found between Forms A and B of the instrument.

FORM A, MEANING FROM CONTEXT
STANDARD ENGLISH

What you will learn: How to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words by getting meaning from the context.

Study the explanation: When reading you will often find words you don't know or are not sure of their meaning. The following are two ways that can help you decide what these words mean: (a) sometimes the words in the sentence can help you find or guess the meaning; (b) sometimes other sentences are needed to help you find or guess the meaning. This way of learning new words is called "getting meaning from context."

Study the example:

> Richard was intrepid. He was not afraid of any man, woman, or beast.

Now, suppose you don't know or aren't sure of the meaning of intrepid. Because the first sentence states that intrepid is something that Richard was and the second sentence states that Richard was fearless, you can figure out that intrepid means without fear.

If you had to choose one of four answers for the meaning of intrepid, which one would you choose? Circle the letter a, b, c, or d.

(a) lazy (b) funny (c) fearless (d) none of these.

Study the following example:

> The building was colossal. It covered two square blocks and its top was in the clouds. Circle the letter a, b, c, or d.

(a) huge (b) interesting (c) ugly (d) attractive.

Now suppose you aren't sure or don't know the meaning of colossal. Because the first sentence states that it is something pertaining to a building and the second states that the building covered two square blocks and that the top was in the clouds, you can figure out that colossal means large or big. Next look at the answers. Then choose the answer that comes closest to the meaning you worked out for colossal. In this example, you know that interesting, ugly, or attractive does not mean large or big. So the answer must be huge. And that's the circled one, right?

Use what you have learned: Study the underlined words in the sentences on the next page. Figure out the meaning by using the context. Then circle the letter in front of the meaning.

FORM B, MEANING FROM CONTEXT
BLACK VERNACULAR

What you gonna learn: How to check out the meaning of words you don't know, or ain't sure of, by digging on the context.

Dig on this: When you be reading, sometimes you get hung up on the words you don't know, or you ain't sure of. Here go two ways you can dig on what them words mean: (a) sometimes you can come up with what a word be meaning by checking out the sentence the word in; (b) other times, you gonna have to check out some more sentences

to help you get the meaning together. Doing these two things is what we be talkin' 'bout when we say digging on the meaning by checking out the context.

Now check out this example: Suppose you was to hear two old men talking. And suppose one of them was to say to the other:

> Look-a-here man, I wanta get a taste and I ain't got but forty cent (40¢). If you let me have a quarter (25¢) till tomorrow, I'll have just enough to get me a short dog.

Now, here's what you gonna have to do if you don't know what the words short dog mean:

1. Check out the first sentence. It says that the old man wanted to get a taste. And when old men say they wanta get a taste, they be talking 'bout getting something to drink.

2. Check out the other sentence. It tells you a short dog costs sixty-five cent (40 + 25 = 65¢).

So you could figure out that something to drink costing sixty-five cent is probably gonna be some wine.

And if you had to pick out one of four answers, which would you choose? a, b, c, or d.

(a) a car (b) a hamburger (c) a small bottle of wine (d) a bottle of whiskey.

Now dig this: You ever hear of the Invectus. Yeah, well anyway its captain, he won the race. He outsailed everybody else. Circle a, b, c, or d.

(a) car (b) train (c) ship (d) truck.

Now suppose this here word Invectus hangs you up. What you gonna do? You got to dig on the meaning by checking out the context. Now if you check out the sentences after the word Invectus, you can figure out it was a boat, a ship, or something like that. 'Cause the second sentence says it had a captain and the last sentence says he won the race by outsailing everybody else. You can figure Invectus is probably some kind of ship.

Next you got to dig on the answers you suppose to choose from. Then you got to pick out the meaning of Invectus that's closest to what you figured out from digging on the context. Now you know a car ain't no ship and don't have no captain. And you know a train and a truck ain't no boat and they don't be having no captain. So you know its gotta be a ship. And that's the one marked, ain't it? Now let's put this stuff to work for you: On the next page, dig on the words that's underlined. Make like you hung up on them. Figure out the meaning by checking out the context. Then circle the letters in front of the meaning you figured out.

The lesson-explanation found in Form A for the Meaning from Context sub-test was written to reflect the use of Standard English in instructional materials used by public school systems in this

country. The language of this section of the sub-test is representative of the language used in a wide variety of instructional materials consumed by the public schools.

The language used in the lesson-explanation of the Meaning from Context sub-test found in Form B is representative of the language spoken by many Black inner-city youths, as described and documented by linguistic research on the speech patterns of Black inner-city youths (Dillard, 1967; Labov, 1967: Steward, 1967, 1968). The language of this section incorporates the grammatical, lexical and syntactical features commonly associated with Black English speakers (see Appendix D for complete copy of STCC).

Procedure

Eight regular classroom teachers administered the Simpkins Test of Cultural Context to their respective classrooms during the month of February, 1977. Forms A and B were randomly ordered and distributed from left to right to the students. The standardized set of teacher directions was read aloud by the teacher. Test timing was also done by the teacher, according to the directions, using the classroom wall clock. Upon completion, or the designated time allowed for taking the test, the teacher collected the tests and returned them to the main office. Once all the tests from the eight classrooms were completed, they were returned to the investigator for scoring by a person not aware of the purpose of the study.

Design

One-way analysis of variance was used in this study to test the major hypothesis. The instructional language used was the independent variable. The dependent variable was the students' performance as measured by the scores on the sub-tests of the STCC.

Subsequent to the completion of the study, this investigator was interested in task difference (see end of Chapter I). To analyze this *post hoc*, a *t* test was used.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the study are based on a sample of 234 seventh and eighth grade students from three urban schools in the Detroit public school system.

Two one-way analyses of variance were performed on the data from the total sample and from each of the three schools. One was based on the subtest scores on the Meaning from Context task, one on the Figurative Language task.

Table 1 presents N's and Table 2 presents means and standard deviations of the total sample and of the three schools when the task was deriving meaning from context. Table 2 indicates that

TABLE 1

Number of Subjects in Sample
(Meaning from Context Task)

Instructional Dialect	Subjects			
	Total	School		
		1	2	3
Group 1 - Standard English	123	39	34	50
Group 2 - Black Vernacular	111	21	35	55
Grand Total	234	60	69	105

the total number of students obtained a mean score of 10.195 when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a

TABLE 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Meaning from Context Subtest Scores

Instructional Dialect	Mean				Standard Deviation			
	Total	School			Total	School		
		1	2	3		1	2	3
Group 1 - Standard English	10.195	10.897	9.205	10.320	3.23	2.53	3.20	3.62
Group 2 - Black Vernacular	11.613	11.857	10.486	12.236	2.43	2.00	2.57	2.27
Difference between Groups	1.418	0.960	1.281	1.916				

a mean score of 11.613 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular. The difference, 1.418, was highly significant. Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of variance (F (1,233) = 14.109, $p < .001$, one-tailed). Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed for the entire sample.

TABLE 3

Analysis of Variance
(Meaning from Context)

Main Effect	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance (one-tailed)
Total	117.234	1,233	117.234	14.10	.001
School 1	12.572	1,59	12.572	2.25	.065
School 2	28.249	1,68	28.249	3.37	.036
School 3	96.133	1,104	96.183	10.76	.001

Table 4 presents the N's and Table 5 shows means and standard deviations of the total sample and of each of the three schools when the task was deducing the meaning of figurative language from contextual clues. The total number of students in the sample obtained a mean score of 5.585 on the Figurative Language subtest when explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 6.544 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular. The difference, .960, was significant. Table 6 presents the results

of the analysis of variance (F (1,233) = 5.181, p = .012, one-tailed). Thus, the second hypothesis was confirmed.

TABLE 4

Number of Subjects in Sample
(Figurative Language Task)

Instructional Dialect	Subjects			
	Total	School		
		1	2	3
Group 1 - Black Vernacular	123	39	34	50
Group 2 - Standard English	111	21	35	55
Grand Total	234	60	69	105

Table 2 indicates also that students in School 1 obtained a mean score of 10.897 on the Meaning from Context subtest when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 11.857 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular. The difference, .96, though it approached significance (p = .065), did not reach an alpha level of .05. Thus, the first hypothesis was not confirmed, taking School 1 by itself, as shown in Table 3 (F (1,59) = 2.24, p = .065, one-tailed).

Table 4 indicates that students in School 1 obtained a mean score of 4.619 on the Figurative Language subtest when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 5.307 with explanations in Black Vernacular. The difference, .688, was not significant, as shown in Table 6 (F (1,59) = 1.00, p = .16,

TABLE 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Figurative Language Subtest Scores

Instructional Dialect	Mean				Standard Deviation			
	Total	School			Total	School		
		1	2	3		1	2	3
Group 1 - Black Vernacular	6.545	5.307	6.118	7.800	3.33	2.83	3.12	3.45
Group 2 - Standard English	5.585	4.619	4.029	6.946	3.09	1.88	2.48	3.23
Difference between Groups	.960	.688	2.089	.854				

one-tailed). The second hypothesis, when taking School 1 by itself, was not confirmed.

TABLE 6

Analysis of Variance
(Figurative Language)

Main Effect	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance (one-tailed)
Total	53.674	1,233	53.674	5.18	.012
School 1	6.473	1,59	6.470	1.00	.160
School 2	75.267	1,68	75.267	9.54	.001
School 3	19.126	1,104	19.126	1.72	.097

The results for School 2 are also presented in Tables 1 through 3. Table 2 indicates that students of School 2 obtained a mean score of 9.206 on the Meaning from Context subtest when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 10.486 on the subtest when the explanations were in Black Vernacular. The difference, 1.280, was significant, as shown in Table 3 (F (1,68) = 3.37, p = .036, one-tailed). Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed for School 2.

As may be seen from Table 5, students in School 2 obtained a mean score of 4.028 on the Figurative Language subtest when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 6.118 with explanations given in Black Vernacular. The

difference, 2.090, was highly significant, as shown in Table 6 (F (1,68) = 9.54, $p < .001$, one-tailed). Thus, the second hypothesis was confirmed for School 2.

The results for School 3 show that students of School 3 obtained a mean score of 10.320 on the Meaning from Context subtest when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 12.236 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular. The difference, 1.916, was highly significant. Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of variance (F (1,104) = 10.76, $p = < .001$).

Table 5 indicates that students in School 3 obtained a mean score of 6.946 on the Figurative Language subtest when the explanations were given in Standard English as compared to a mean score of 7.800 on the subtest with explanations in Black Vernacular. The difference, .854, was not significant, as shown in Table 6 (F (1,104) = 1.725, p = .097.

One question that interested this investigator was the comparative difficult of the two tasks--Meaning from Context and Figurative Language. Accordingly, a t test was performed for the total sample. Table 7 indicates that performance on the task, Meaning from Context, was significantly superior to that on the task, Figurative Language. The total sample mean score for Meaning from Context, regardless of the instructional dialect, was 10.868 as compared to a mean score of 6.090 for Figurative Language. The difference between the means of the tasks, 4.778, was highly significant (t = 21.04, $p = < .001$).

TABLE 7

Means and Standard Deviations of
Meaning from Context Task and Figurative Language Task

Task	Number of Subjects	Mean	S.D.	t	DF	Significance (one-tailed)
Meaning from Context		10.868	2.962			
	234			21.04	233	.001
Figurative Language		6.090	3.247			
Difference		4.778				

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The overall results of this research support the general hypothesis that when Black non-mainstream students are tested for their comprehension of reading materials in Standard English, they will do significantly better when the instructions for the reading lesson are presented in Black Vernacular than when the instructions are presented in Standard English. The students who participated in the study scored significantly higher on both the Meaning from Context sub-test and also the Figurative Language sub-test when the instructional dialect was Black Vernacular. Thus, these findings confirm the two specific hypotheses of this dissertation:

1. When Black non-mainstream students are instructed in Black Vernacular on how to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases from clues in reading material, they will do significantly better, when tested on their comprehension of the reading material, than where such students are instructed in Standard English.

2. When Black non-mainstream students are instructed in Black Vernacular on how to deduce the meaning of figurative language from clues in reading material, they will do significantly better, when tested on their comprehension of the reading material, than where such students are instructed in Standard English.

This investigator was curious about whether the results for the entire sample would hold for each school participating in the study. When the schools are considered individually, similarities and differences in the results can be observed. Although the students in School 1 received a higher mean score when explanations were presented in Black Vernacular as compared to explanations given in Standard English, the differences were not significant.

On the other hand, the results of the data for School 2 support both the general as well as the two specific hypotheses. The students in School 2 scored significantly higher when the instructions were presented in Black Vernacular. In School 3, although the mean scores of instructions in Black Vernacular for both tasks were higher than the mean scores of instructions in Standard English, only in the case of Meaning from Context was the difference significantly higher--thus, supporting the first hypothesis.

The author is uncertain as to why the data from School 1 failed to support the general and specific hypotheses. However, the racial composition of the three schools may provide a clue. Of the three schools participating in the study, School 1 had the lowest percentage of minority students. The mean percentage of minority students in the three schools taken together was 85 percent. However, the percentage of minority students in School 1 was only 59 percent as compared to 99 percent minority students in Schools 2 and 3. It seems reasonable to speculate that the use of Black

Vernacular as the instructional language is effective for precisely the target population for which STCC was developed. The high proportion of non-minority students may well have watered down group differences in School 1. This leads the author to speculate that the racial composition of the school might be an important independent variable.

In sum, then, the overall results of this study tend to support Simpkins' (1976) contention that the cognition of Black non-mainstream students is differentially affected by the cultural context of the language used in presenting and explaining a learning task.

It will be recalled (see Chapter II) that Simpkins postulates that differences in academic performance between Black non-mainstream students and mainstream students occur because the cognitive apparatus of Black non-mainstream students is often differentially triggered by the cultural context of the language used.

The results are consistent with those reported by Williams and Rivers (1975). It will be recalled (see Chapter II) that the scores of 900 Black students on the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts were significantly higher when the instructional language was translated to what they call the non-standard version (Black Vernacular). Williams and Rivers concluded from their data that

> ...Black children are penalized by instructions on group tests which are presented in standard English. However, the results also indicate that when the language in...test instructions is modified to be more compatible with the dialectic environment with

> which the child is familiar, he performs as well as, and in some cases, better than high socio-economic children....

The results of the present study were similar to those reported by Stephen and Joan Baratz (1970) on a sentence repetition task study, as noted in Chapter II. It will be recalled that they found that when the language of a sentence repetition task, which Black students had performed poorly, was translated into the students' familiar dialect, the students performed significantly better.

The findings of this study are also consistent with the field test results of Bridge: A Cross-Culture Reading Program (Houghton Mifflin, 1975). The Bridge reading program incorporates Black Vernacular in its instructions, skills, and reading selections. Houghton Mifflin reports that Black inner-city students in the experimental group who used the Bridge program scored significantly higher on standardized reading tests than the Black students in the control group who used the regular reading programs of the school.

Conclusions and Implications

The literature on school achievement consistently reports that Black children are lagging behind in achievement in the public schools. Black children, as documented by numerous research studies, score lower than their White counterparts on standardized tests of cognitive abilities. Black students have repeatedly scored below national norms in all academic areas. As a result of the data on school achievement, it has been generally assumed that the cognitive processes of

Black children are deficient in relation to the same processes in White children.

The overwhelming majority of the literature on cognition pertaining to Black children tends to relate poor performance on standardized tests of cognitive abilities and on school tasks in general to deprivation and lack of growth opportunities in the Black community. This alleged deprivation and lack of growth opportunities is assumed to be caused by a defective environment and culture. The terms "culturally deprived" and "culturally disadvantaged" are outgrowths of this assumption. Terms such as these, and the theories which they conveyed, served as convenient explanations for the widespread failure of Black children in this country's public school systems.

The findings of this study strongly suggest an alternative explanation. The possibility exists that the poor performance exhibited by Black students on standardized tests and in school in general, is not caused by a deprived environment and culture, but is related to the language of instructional materials and tests used by the schools. Many of the alleged deficiencies noted by the deficit model theorists may in fact be artifacts of the failure of the American educational system to accommodate and accept the language and culture of Black students as a bridge to achieving facility in concepts couched in Standard English.

It seems plausible to draw two major conclusions from this study: (a) Black non-mainstream students appear to be penalized

by the failure of most tests and instructional materials to incorporate the most familiar language in the explanations and instructions of cognitive tasks which they are expected to perform and (b) when the language used in instructional materials is modified to be more compatible with the cultural-linguistic environment with which Black non-mainstream children are familiar, they will score significantly higher on such tests.

Directions for Future Research

There are numerous directions for future research on the study of the effects of instructions or explanations presented in Black Vernacular in tests and instructional materials. Several major areas are as follows:

1. Future studies should be conducted covering the entire grade range of the public school system--elementary through secondary.

2. A wide variety of cognitive tasks should be experimented with in order to ascertain whether the results of this study can be replicated across additional cognitive tasks, and thus generalized to cognitive learning in general.

3. Racial composition of groups participating in future studies should be incorporated in the design as an independent variable.

APPENDIX A

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH STUDIES IN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH STUDIES IN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

During the past few years there have been numerous requests to conduct research studies of various kinds in the Detroit Public Schools. These requests have come from governmental and non-governmental agencies, universities, private groups, and from individual students engaged in graduate study. Most of these studies have been of such a nature that their completion would be impossible without the assistance and cooperation of school personnel.

The general statement of policy on educational research in the Detroit Public Schools is the following:

> Being sensitive to the role research has played in various fields of endeavor, particularly education, the Detroit Public Schools will continue to foster educational research by official departments of the school system and by other individuals and organizations when the conduct of such projects is feasible and does not conflict with the major function of the schools. Therefore, it is the policy of the Detroit Public Schools to review requests for assistance in conducting research studies initiated by individuals and governmental and non-governmental organizations, and to notify schools of approved requests, inviting voluntary participation by school personnel immediately concerned with the research proposal.

While encouraging educational research, the school system also has to take into account the fact that its most important activity is that of instruction. The attitudes of teachers and administrators are adversely affected by requirements that they spend significant amounts of time on other matters. Therefore, the review of research requests must take cognizance of the extent of the schools' involvement in research requests at any given time and the potential significance of the requested research.

In order that there be effective encouragement of research which contributes to improving the education of children, the Research Committee and the Research Department will be expected to play an active role in eliciting the interest of both institutions and individual researchers in doing research which contributes to the solutions of the problems confronting our teachers and our schools. Efforts will be made to cooperate with individuals, universities, and other educational institutions taking the initiative in stimulating and encouraging research of the programmatic or action type that will help teachers and administrators in their educational functions.

Constant efforts to improve instruction is the hallmark of the good teacher. Efforts to improve are encouraged at all times. Principals and teachers are encouraged to suggest projects and to participate in projects which will contribute to the improvement of education. In keeping with the desire of the school system to increase the competence of its own personnel, highest priority will be accorded all such efforts, and the Research Department offers to help teachers, administrators, and various departments of the school system in their conduct of research and in the designing and evaluating of new procedures.

In dealing with requests for approval of research projects, weight must be given to two factors: (1) Diversion of teacher time from direct instruction of children for any but the most important reasons is undesirable; the administration as a matter of policy is committed to the reduction of paper work and of interruptions of instruction: (2) Research is useful primarily when its results enter the mainstream of professional thinking or provide direct assistance to someone engaged in the instruction of children. Therefore, approval will generally not be given to projects whose results are likely to be embalmed in unpublished term papers, undergraduate theses, or to any project whose subject matter or design raises questions as to value.

By the same token encouragement will be given for university departments and similar organizations to develop research programs, particularly those of action-research nature, which will contribute toward solutions of problems of urban education.

Priorities of Approval

Review of requests to conduct research projects and studies initiated by individuals and organizations not officially charged with research for the Detroit schools will be conducted so that (a) each request will be considered on its own merits, and (b) each request will be analyzed for the contribution that it will make to education in general and to the Detroit public school system in particular.

A research study to be approved must be one that as to subject matter, timeliness and purpose meets reasonable standards of educational and social responsibility. In general, priority of approval will be given to:

1. Studies related to major policy decisions in educational programs as represented by recommendations of study commissions, and departments or divisions of the school system

2. Master's degree or doctoral studies conducted by employees of the Detroit Public Schools which are part of the training of the employees

3. Studies which show promise of making a contribution to improving the quality of education and enhancing the experimental endeavors underway in the school system

4. Staff studies by universities, civic, and educational organizations which will be beneficial to both the school system and the organization

5. Doctoral studies by persons who are not employees of the school system and studies which are likely to be published in the educational literature

Procedures

All research projects to be conducted in the schools must have approval. The Superintendent has designated a Research Committee for this purpose. Any person or group seeking to conduct research should submit a written request to the Research Department on a form which will be supplied. Copies of all instruments, questionnaires, and interview schedules to be used in the proposed project must accompany the request.

Procedural guidelines are as follows:

1. Participation of school personnel is to be entirely voluntary on the part of the individuals concerned.

2. The proposal should include a brief statement of purpose of the study and a detailed description of methods and procedures including the way any instrumentation will be used in completing the study.

3. In the case of graduate student proposals, a statement from faculty advisor or committee endorsing the study as being educationally worthwhile and approving the study design and instrumentation should accompany the request.

4. The Detroit Public Schools assume no responsibility for completing any project or for providing technical or other types of assistance.

5. If school clerical assistance is required, the research worker must provide clerical personnel or pay for overtime work by the clerical staff of the school system.

6. Notice of approval will be sent to the Region Superintendent who may forward it to the principals of schools involved; they in turn indicate their willingness to participate voluntarily in the project as proposed.

7. After the principal has indicated his willingness to participate in the study, arrangements for conducting the research may be made either by the Research Department or by the persons conducting the study.

8. Individuals or organizations conducting approved studies will be responsible for supplying the Research Department with a written summary of their findings, and if so requested, for reporting detailed study findings to interested school personnel at a meeting arranged by the Research Department or others.

Some restrictions on the type of information to be released to research workers are:

1. No names or addresses of teachers, pupils or parents are given to research workers. If any contact is to be made with these persons outside of the school, they themselves must supply the information.

2. Anonymity must be preserved whenever records are used which could serve to identify individual students, staff members, or schools.

3. The privacy of pupils who are "captive" subjects of research is protected through restrictions on questions which may be considered as invasions of privacy. These restrictions govern questions concerning race, religion, parental income, family relationships, education, and occupation. Where such questions are sometimes permitted in order to gather information essential to the carrying out of a research design, directions both oral and printed on instruments must state that the respondent has the right to skip any questions which he does not care to answer.

Some proposed studies of satisfactory design may not be approved because of one or more of the following reasons:

1. Undue amounts of pupil or staff time are required.

2. Educational and/or social significance is lacking.

3. The research would disrupt the functioning of the school or classrooms.

4. The research would interfere with good professional relationships.

5. Invasion or privacy is involved.

6. Interference or duplication with other research and evaluation studies would occur.

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH STUDY FOR WHICH APPROVAL IS SOUGHT FROM THE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION DEPARTMENT (to be conducted in Detroit Schools)

Research Study for Which Approval is Sought from the
Research and Evaluation Department
(to be conducted in Detroit Schools)

Research Worker: Date _____

Name _____ Home Telephone _____

Position _____ Business Telephone _____

Home Address _____ Degree Sought by
Research Worker _____

_____
City State Zip

Institution:

_____
Signature and title of advisor, project
director, or committee approving study

Grant-in-aid from:

Title of Study:

Purpose of Study:

Procedures: (see reverse side if necessary)

Schools, teachers, and/or pupils involved:

Starting date _____ Period required _____

Summary of results:

I agree to supply the Research and Evaluation Department with a summary of the results obtained from this study and information as to where the completed study may be found.

Signed _____

Send one copy of any instruments to be used (tests, questionnaires with this request for research study approval to:

Research File No. _____

John R. Lindsey Phone: 931-0650
Detroit Public Schools
Research and Evaluation Department
10100 Grand River, Room 300
Detroit, Michigan 48204

APPENDIX C

NOTICE OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE IN APPROVED RESEARCH STUDY

SUBJECT: Approved Research Study Research Study No. 76060

FROM : Robert S. Lankton, Divisional Director

TO : _____, Principal _____
School

DATE : January 6, 1977

The research study identified below has been reviewed and approved by the Research and Evaluation Department subject to authorization to conduct the study by the Region Superintendent and the principal, in accordance with the statement of policy in the Administrative Handbook and the Guidelines of October 16, 1970, p. 17. Participation by individuals or by schools in this project is entirely voluntary.

If you desire further information, please call Dr. John R. Lindsey of the Research Department, 931-0650, Stevenson Building, Room 300.

Name of Research Worker

Charlesetta Simpkins, Ed.D. candidate, University of Massachusetts

Title of Project

Effects of the Cultural Context of Language on the Cognitive Performance of Inner-City Students

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to assess under which context inner-city students learn better--Black cultural context or mainstream cultural context.

Schools and Teachers to be Involved

The investigator needs 200 7th and 8th grade students, both sexes, who read at or above the second grade level. The teachers of classes involved will administer the Simpkins Test of Cognitive Context to the students.

Starting Date

The starting date for the project is January 20, and will continue through February 3.

Procedure

If your school is willing to participate in the study, sufficient copies of the Simpkins Test of Cognitive Context (S.T.C.C.) will be sent for each participating 7th or 8th grade class. There are two forms of the test. One form has a "lesson" on Meaning from Context and Figurative Language written in Black cultural context preceding the test items. The other form has the "lesson" written in mainstream cultural context. The directions for taking the test will be read aloud and test timing done by the teacher in a regular classroom setting. The total time for administering the test is approximately 40 minutes. The research worker will make arrangements with the individual schools for distributing test booklets and for collecting the completed booklets.

Principals' Action

Please complete the two attached reply slips; send the PINK slip to your Region Superintendent; if your response is affirmative, indicate the number of 7th grade and 8th grade classes which will be participating on the WHITE sheet and return it to the Research and Evaluation Department, Room 300, Stevenson Building.

dcw

TO: REGION SUPERINTENDENT

REGION _____

SUBJECT: Research Study No. _____

FROM : _____, Principal _____ School

TO : Region Superintendent, Region No. _____

DATE : _____

Our school is able and willing ☐ to participate in this study.

Our school is unable or unwilling ☐ to participate in this study.

Please complete and sign the above form, fold along the dotted line on the back side, staple or tape the edges together and place it in the pick-up.

TO: ROBERT S. LANKTON

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

ROOM 300

STEVENSON BUILDING

APPENDIX D

Two Forms of
SIMPKINS TEST OF CULTURAL CONTEXT

S.T.C.C.

Meaning From Context and
Understanding Figurative Language,
Lesson and Test

Form A

Birthdate _____

Sex _____

Grade _____

DO NOT OPEN UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO!

Section One

Context

What you will learn: How to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words by getting meaning from the context.

Study the explanation: When reading you will often find words you don't know or are not sure of their meaning. The following are two ways that can help you decide what these words mean: (a) Sometimes the words in the sentence can help you find or guess the meaning; (b) Sometimes other sentences are needed to help you find or guess the meaning. This way of learning new words is called "getting meaning from context."

Study the example:

> Richard was intrepid. He was not afraid of any man, woman, or beast.

Now, suppose you don't know or aren't sure of the meaning of intrepid. Because the first sentence states that intrepid is something that Richard was and the second sentence states that Richard was fearless, you can figure out that intrepid means without fear.

If you had to choose one of four answers for the meaning of intrepid, which one would you choose? Circle the letter a, b, c, or d.

(a) lazy (b) funny (c) fearless (d) none of these

Correct, fearless.

GO ON!

Study the following example:

The building was colossal. It covered two square blocks. And its top was in the clouds. Circle the letter a, b, c, or d.

(a) huge (b) interesting (c) ugly (d) attractive

Now suppose you aren't sure or don't know the meaning of colossal. Because the first sentence states that it is something pertaining to a building and the second states that the building covered two square blocks and that the top was in the clouds, you can figure out that colossal means large or big. Next look at the answers. Then choose the answer that comes closest to the meaning you worked out for colossal. In this example, you know that interesting, ugly, or attractive doesn't mean large or big. So the answer must be huge. And that's the one circled, right?

Use what you have learned: Study the underlined words in the sentences on the next page. Figure out the meaning by using the context. Then circle the letter in front of the meaning.

STOP! DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO.

Directions: Circle a, b, c, or d. There is only one answer for each question.

1. Today was Gloria's birthday. Her mother baked a cake to celebrate the occasion.

   (a) decorate (b) surprise (c) honor (d) none of these

2. She looked at her reflection in the morror. She didn't like what she saw.

   (a) beauty (b) dress (c) image (d) none of these

3. Willie was always punctual. He was never late.

   (a) early (b) on time (c) tardy (d) none of these

4. The company my father owns is going to amalgamate with two other companies to form a large business.

   (a) combine (b) run a sale (c) go out of business
   (d) none of these

5. Our cat does not like to be solitary. She is sad when she is not with other cats or people.

   (a) hungry (b) cold (c) angry (d) none of these

6. Joyce was an indolent girl. She didn't like work of any kind and spent most of her time lying around the house or sleeping.

   (a) lazy (b) mean (c) intelligent (d) none of these

7. The old house was badly in need of repairs. It was leaning to one side, had holes in the roof, and needed to be painted. But the barnwas even more dilapidated.

   (a) beautiful (b) rundown (c) charming (d) none of these

GO ON!

8. Each year there are fewer and fewer eagles in this country. Soon the eagle will die or be killed off, and this kind of bird will be extinct.

(a) expensive (b) plentiful (c) out of existence
(d) none of these

9. Using dope is against the law. If you are caught using it, you can be put in jail for violating the law.

(b) breaking (b) following (c) bending (d) none of these

10. The book was too complicated for the students. The teacher assigned another book that was easier.

(a) dull (b) interesting (c) funny (d) none of these

11. The fog obstructed his vision. He could only see two feet in front of him.

(a) blocked (b) increased (c) cleared (d) none of these

12. Only a craven would sneak around sending poison-pen letters. Why didn't you tell me, to my face, what you thought of me?

(a) brave person (b) cowardly person (c) honest person
(d) none of these

13. Mary was usually very well dressed, but today she looked haggard.

(a) cheerful (b) neat (c) pretty (d) none of these

14. After a couple of years, a great deal of garbage and litter accumulated bit by bit in the old neighborhood.

(a) piled up (b) began to smell (c) decreased
(d) none of these

STOP! DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO.

Section Two

Figurative Language

What you gonna learn: To dig on talk that saying more than what the words really mean.

Check this out: You got what they call figurative language when you come across words that saying something but ain't really saying what it saying. To understand this here figurative language thing, to really get it together, you got to use a little taste of imagination. You can't be using the exact meaning of the words. What you got to do is trip on the pictures that the words be painting for you.

Now dig this: Suppose you was to hear two Brothers talking. And suppose one of them was to say to the other:

Man, that Billy, he fat as a rat in a cheese factory.

Now, what you think the Brother saying 'bout Billy? Now you know he ain't saying that Billy overweight. And he ain't trying to get down on Billy by saying he ugly as a rat eating cheese. What he saying is that Billy he got a lot of bread, or that Billy got over, or that Billy got it made.

Now, if you was to have to pick one of the four meanings from what the Brother said, which one would you pick? Put a circle around a, b, c, or d.

(a) Billy got fat because he ate too much cheese.

(b) Billy looked like a fat rat.

(c) Billy had everything he needed to get over.

(b) Billy was as ugly as a rat in a cheese factory.

(c) is correct

Now check out this here example:

I wouldn't give a cripple crab a crutch if I owned a lumber yard.

Now trip on what a Brother be saying if he was to say this to you. First trip hard on a poor cripple crab who need a crutch to walk. All he need is a little crutch, a little piece of wood to tighten him up. And this here Brother, he owns a big, old lumber yard, but he won't even give this here poor cripple crab a little piece of wood to walk with.

Now what picture do that paint for you? And what you think the Brother be trying to tell you when he say he wouldn't give a cripple crab a crutch? The Brother, he be telling you that he tight, and don't be asking him for no money 'cause he don't be loaning no money, giving no credit, or doing no favors for nobody at all. You understand? Now, if you was to have to pick one of four meanings for what the Brother mean, which one would you pick? Put a circle around a, b, c, or d.

(a) he disliked crabs

(b) he was tight with his lumber

(c) he didn't believe in giving nothing to nobody

(d) none of these

Right! (c) he didn't believe in giving nothing to nobody

Now let's put this stuff to work for you: Dig on the words that's underlined on the next page. Pick out what the underlined words really be saying. Then circle the letter in front of the words you picked out.

STOP! DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO.

1. She was green with envy.

   (a) she was sickly
   (b) she was cheerful
   (c) she was jealous
   (d) none of these

2. He was in the dawn of his life.

   (a) he was in the middle of his life
   (b) he was in the beginning of his life
   (c) he was at the end of his life
   (d) none of these

3. An empty can makes the loudest noise.

   (a) those who have the most to say talk the loudest
   (b) empty cans make good dreams
   (c) those who have the least to say talk the loudest
   (d) none of these

4. Birds of a feather flock together.

   (a) birds like to travel in groups
   (b) birds feel safer in groups
   (c) people tend to seek out their own kind
   (d) none of these

5. He was like a diamond in the rough.

   (a) he was round and hard
   (b) he was cool and cutting
   (c) he had great ability, but it needed to be developed
   (d) none of these

GO ON!

6. "The white man speaks with a forked tongue," said the Indian.

(a) he speaks the truth

(b) he speaks good English

(c) he has a deformed tongue

(d) none of these

7. Like old trees, we die from the top.

(a) our hair dies first

(b) a tree's branches die first

(c) the higher a person is, the quicker he dies

(d) none of these

8. Her tears were like tears from a block of ice.

(a) she cried but showed no real feelings

(b) her tears were frozen

(c) she had chills

(d) none of these

9. He looked at her like he would a snake's egg hatching.

(a) he looked at her with love

(b) he looked at her tenderly

(c) he looked at her with curiosity and dislike

(d) none of these

GO ON!

10. A stitch in time saves nine.

(a) there will be eight stitches left

(b) don't talk with your mouth full

(c) you have to thread your needle before you sew

(d) none of these

11. Life is like a narrow valley between two cold and empty peaks of eternity

(a) life has its ups and downs

(b) life is hard if you're poor

(c) life is narrow if you're short

(d) none of these

12. It was like pouring salt on her wounds.

(a) helping her get better

(b) salt cleans

(c) going from bad to worse

(d) none of these

13. She acted as if she were playing the title role at a funeral.

(a) she was overcome with sadness

(b) she was happy

(c) she wants to be an actress

(d) none of these

GO ON!

14. Never throw stones if you live in a glass house.

(a) glass is easily broken

(b) the stone you throw might hit your house

(c) make sure you have nothing to hide before you accuse others

(d) none of these

STOP! YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TEST. CLOSE YOUR BOOKLET. WAIT QUIETLY UNTIL THE TEST IS OVER.

S.T.C.C.

Meaning From Context and
Understanding Figurative Language,
Lesson and Test

Form B

Birthdate _____

Sex _____

Grade _____

DO NOT OPEN UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO!

Section One

Context

What you gonna learn: How to check out the meaning of words you don't know, or ain't sure of, by digging on the context.

Dig on this: When you be reading, sometimes you get hung up on words you don't know, or you ain't sure of. Here go two ways you can dig on what them words mean: (a) Sometimes you can come up with what a word be meaning by checking out the sentence the word in; (b) Other times, you gonna have to check out some more sentences to help you get the meaning together. Doing these two things is what we be talkin' 'bout when we say digging on the meaning by checking out the context.

Now check out this example: Suppose you was to hear two old men talking. And suppose one of them was to say to the other:

> Look-a-here man, I wanta get a taste and I ain't got but forty cent (40¢). If you let me have a quarter (25¢) till tomorrow, I'll have just enough to get me a short dog.

Now, here's what you gonna have to do if you don't know what the words short dog mean:

GO ON!

1. Check out the first sentence. It says that the old man wanted to get a taste. And when old men say they wanta get a taste, they be talking 'bout getting something to drink.

2. Check out the other sentence. It tells you a short dog costs sixty-five cent (40 + 25 = 65¢).

So you could figure out that something to drink costing sixty-five cent is probably gonna be some wine. And if you had to pick out one of four answers, which would you choose? Circle a, b, c, or d.

(a) a car (b) a hamburger (c) a small bottle of wine
(d) a bottle of whiskey

Now dig this: You ever hear of the Invectus. Yeah, well anyway its captain, he won the race. He outsailed everybody else. Circle a, b, c, or d.

(a) car (b) train (c) ship (d) truck

Now suppose this here word Invectus hangs you up. What you gonna do? You got to dig on the meaning by checking out the context. Now if you check out the sentences after the word Invectus, you can figure out it was a boat, a ship, or something like that. 'Cause the second sentence says it had a captain and the last sentence says he won the race by outsailing everybody else. You can figure Invectus is probably some kind of ship.

Next you got to dig on the answers you suppose to choose from. Then you got to pick out the meaning of Invectus that's closest to what you figured out from digging on the context. Now you know a car ain't no

ship and don't have no captain. And you know a train and a truck ain't no boat and they don't be having no captain. So you know it's gotta be a ship. And that's the one marked, ain't it?

Now let's put this stuff to work for you: On the next page dig on the words that's underlined. Make like you hung up on them. Figure out the meaning by checking out the context. Then circle the letter in front of the meaning you figured out.

STOP! DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO.

Directions: Circle a, b, c, or d. There is only one answer for each question.

1. Today was Gloria's birthday. Her mother baked a cake to celebrate the occasion.

   (a) decorate (b) surprise (c) honor (d) none of these

2. She looked at her reflection in the mirror. She didn't like what she saw.

   (a) beauty (b) dress (c) image (d) none of these

3. Willie was always punctual. He was never late.

   (a) early (b) on time (c) tardy (d) none of these

4. The company my father owns is going to amalgamate with two other companies to form a large business.

   (a) combine (b) run a sale (c) go out of business
   (d) none of these

5. Our cat does not like to be solitary. She is sad when she is not with other cats or people.

   (a) hungry (b) cold (c) angry (d) none of these

6. Joyce was an indolent girl. She didn't like work of any kind and spent most of her time lying around the house or sleeping.

   (a) lazy (b) mean (c) intelligent (d) none of these

7. The old house was badly in need of repairs. It was leaning to one side, had holes in the roof, and needed to be painted. But the barn was even more dilapidated.

   (a) beautiful (b) rundown (c) charming (d) none of these

GO ON!

8. Each year there are fewer and fewer eagles in this country. Soon the eagle will die or be killed off, and this kind of bird will be extinct.

(a) expensive (b) plentiful (c) out of existence (d) none of these

9. Using dope is against the law. If you are caught using it, you can be put in jail for violating the law.

(a) breaking (b) following (c) bending (d) none of these

10. The book was too complicated for the students. The teacher assigned another book that was easier.

(a) dull (b) interesting (c) funny (d) none of these

11. The fog obstructed his vision. He could only see two feet in front of him.

(a) blocked (b) increased (c) cleared (d) none of these

12. Only a craven would sneak around sending poison-pen letters. Why didn't you tell me, to my face, what you ghought of me?

(a) brave person (b) cowardly person (c) honest person (d) none of these

13. Mary was usually very well dressed, but today she looked haggard.

(a) cheerful (b) neat (c) pretty (d) none of these

14. After a couple of years, a great deal of garbage and litter accumulated bit by bit in the old neighborhood.

(a) piled up (b) began to smell (c) decreased (d) none of these

STOP! DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO.

Section Two

Figurative Language

What you will learn: To understand language that says more than the words themselves.

Study the explanation: Figurative language refers to a word or group of words that describes something as though it were something else. To understand figurative language, you can't use the exact meanings of the words. Instead, you must visualize the idea that the words suggest. You must allow the words to paint pictures in your mind.

Study the example: A poet once advised,

> Gather ye (your) rosebuds while ye (you) may
> Old time is still a-flying
> And this same flower that smiles today
> Tomorrow will be dying.

What does the above example suggest you? What advice do you think the poet is giving? Is he talking about picking rosebuds, or is he talking about people and life? To understand what the poet is talking about, you can't use the exact meaning of the words. If you allow the words to paint a picture in your mind, you will discover that the poet is talking about people and life.

Now, if you had to choose one of four meanings for what the poet was advising, which one would you choose? Circle the letter a, b, c, or d.

(a) Rosebuds should be picked immediately because they die in a day.

(b) Enjoy yourself while you're young because life is short and you will soon be dead.

(c) Pick rosebuds when they smile because the next day they die.

(d) None of these.

(b) is correct

Study the example: She was as graceful as a cow on ice skates.

(a) She made ice-skating look easy.

(b) She was a skillful ice skater.

(c) She skated not only on two legs, but her arms as well.

(d) She was a clumsy ice skater.

If you heard someone describe a girl in the above manner, what do you think the person would be saying about her? He/she wouldn't be saying that she was graceful, because a cow on ice skates would certainly not be graceful. The person would be saying she was awkward or clumsy.

Use what you have learned: Study the underlined words on the next page. Figure out the meaning of the underlined words. Then circle the letter in front of the words closest to the meaning you selected.

STOP! DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOUR TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO SO.

1. She was green with envy.

   (a) she was sickly
   (b) she was cheerful
   (c) she was jealous
   (d) none of these

2. He was in the dawn of his life.

   (a) he was in the middle of his life
   (b) he was in the beginning of his life
   (c) he was at the end of his life
   (d) none of these

3. An empty can makes the loudest noise.

   (a) those who have the most to say, talk the loudest
   (b) empty cans make good dreams
   (c) those who have the least to say, talk the loudest
   (d) none of these

4. Birds of a feather flock together.

   (a) birds like to travel in groups
   (b) birds feel safer in groups
   (c) people tend to seek out their own kind
   (d) none of these

5. He was like a diamond in the rough.

   (a) he was round and hard
   (b) he was cool and cutting
   (c) he had great ability but it needed to be developed
   (d) none of these

GO ON!

6. "The white man speaks with a forked tongue," said the Indian.

(a) he speaks the truth

(b) he speaks good English

(c) he has a deformed tongue

(d) none of these

7. Like old trees, we die from the top.

(a) our hair dies first

(b) a tree's branches die first

(c) the higher a person is, the quicker he dies

(d) none of these

8. Her tears were like tears from a block of ice.

(a) she cried but showed no real feelings

(b) her tears were frozen

(c) she had chills

(d) none of these

9. He looked at her like he would a snake's egg hatching.

(a) he looked at her with love

(b) he looked at her tenderly

(c) he looked at her with curiosity and dislike

(d) none of these

10. A stitch in time saves nine.

(a) there will be eight stitches left

(b) don't talk with your mouth full

GO ON!

(c) you have to thread your needle before you sew

(d) none of these

11. Life is <u>like a narrow valley between two cold and empty peaks of eternity</u>.

(a) life has its ups and downs

(b) life is hard if you're poor

(c) life is narrow if you're short

(d) none of these

12. It was <u>like pouring salt on her wounds</u>.

(a) helping her get better.

(b) salt cleans

(c) going from bad to worse

(d) none of these

13. <u>She acted as if she were playing the title role at a funeral</u>.

(a) she was overcome with sadness

(b) she was happy

(c) she wants to be an actress

(d) none of these

14. <u>Never throw stones if you live in a glass house</u>.

(a) glass is easily broken

(b) the stone you throw might hit your house

(c) make sure you have nothing to hide before you accuse others

(d) none of these

STOP! YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TEST. CLOSE YOUR BOOKLET. SIT QUIETLY UNTIL THE TEST IS OVER.

SIMPKINS TEST OF CULTURAL CONTEXT

ANSWERS

Form A Deriving Meaning from Context		Form B Deducing the Meaning of Figurative Language from Linguistic Clues	
Question	Correct Choice	Question	Correct Choice
1	c	1	c
2	c	2	b
3	b	3	c
4	a	4	c
5	d	5	c
6	a	6	d
7	b	7	d
8	c	8	a
9	a	9	c
10	d	10	d
11	a	11	d
12	b	12	c
13	d	13	d
14	a	14	c

APPENDIX E

TEACHER DIRECTIONS

Teacher Directions

Note: It is critically important that the booklets are passed out in numerical order (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) from left to right for each row of students.

INSTRUCTIONS TO BE READ ALOUD BY TEACHER

I'm going to pass out some booklets. Leave them on your desk as I place them. Do not open them.

Today you are going to have a lesson test on Meaning from Context and Figurative Language. The lessons will explain what these two things are and how to use them. But first, look at the page in front of you. At the lower half of the page there is information for you to fill in. On the first line, "birthdate," write the month, day and year of your birth. On the second line, "sex," write your sex, F for female or M for male. (Pause) On the third line, "grade," write the grade which you are in presently. (Pause) Are there any questions?

Turn to the next page. Do not start until I tell you to do so. It should say Section One, Context. Read this lesson to yourself silently until it says "Stop." There are two pages. Do not ask questions of your fellow students or me once you start. You have five minutes to read these directions. Start!

After five minutes, say: Raise your hand if you have finished reading the directions. Any students who have not finished reading the directions will have an additional minute to read them.

When all the students have finished reading the directions, say: Do not turn your page until I tell you to do so. You will be given ten minutes to work fourteen test items. Once you begin, I can't answer any questions. Are there any questions now? (Pause) Remember to work quietly. Turn the page and work until you see the word "Stop." Start!

After ten minutes, say: Stop! (Pause) Turn to page 5. (Pause) It should say Section Two, Figurative Language. Read this lesson to yourself silently until it says "Stop." There are two pages. Do not ask questions of your fellow students or me once you start. You have five minutes to read these directions. Start!

After five minutes, say: Raise your hand if you have finished reading the directions. Any students who have not finished reading the directions will have an additional minute to read them.

When all the students have finished reading the directions, say: Do not turn your page until I tell you to do so. You will be given ten minutes to work fourteen test items. Once you begin, I can't answer any questions. Are there any questions now? (Pause) Remember to work quietly. Turn the page and work until you see the word "Stop." Start!

After ten minutes, say: Stop! (Pause) Close your booklets. Pass your booklets to the left. Thank you.

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